



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2269 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3906
FAX: (202) 225-3303

REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL,
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SUBCOMMITTEE

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0549

VISTA DISTRICT OFFICE:
1800 THIBODO ROAD, SUITE 310
VISTA, CA 92081
(760) 599-5000
FAX: (760) 599-1178

DANA POINT OFFICE:
33282 GOLDEN LANTERN, SUITE 102
DANA POINT, CA 92629
(949) 281-2449
www.issa.house.gov

October 24, 2016

The Honorable Ash Carter
Secretary
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Mr. Carter:

As a federal representative from the State of California, I write to express my strong objection to the California National Guard's outrageous decision to punish nearly 10,000 current and retired veterans for the incompetence and wrongdoing of others.

On October 22, 2016, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that nearly 10,000 soldiers in the California National Guard have been ordered to repay enlistment bonuses of \$15,000 or more that they were granted, in return for enlisting or reenlisting in the Guard during the peak of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Due to extreme mismanagement of this bonus program that was discovered in subsequent years, the Department of Defense has decided to renege on its commitment and order the repayment of these enlistment bonuses.

This is a debt that veterans who enlisted and went to war in the service of our country simply do not deserve. Although California Guard officials have pledged to work with veterans that wish to file appeals to the National Guard Bureau and the Army Board for Correction of Military Records to clear these debts, this is insufficient. Accountability demands much more. This is not how any veteran should be treated.

The Department of Defense should immediately halt the retrieval of these debts, and when Congress returns in November, I will insist this issue be permanently resolved with language in the National Defense Authorization Act awaiting final passage in both Chambers.

It is unconscionable that the burden of bureaucratic malfeasance and corruption over a decade ago is being borne by heroes who stepped forward, put themselves in harm's way and fought to keep our nation safe.

Please immediately inform our offices, in addition to the appropriate Congressional committees of jurisdiction, of the steps you will be taking to promptly fix this problem -- and in a way that makes whole every one of these veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Darrell Issa', with a stylized, cursive script.

Darrell Issa
Member of Congress